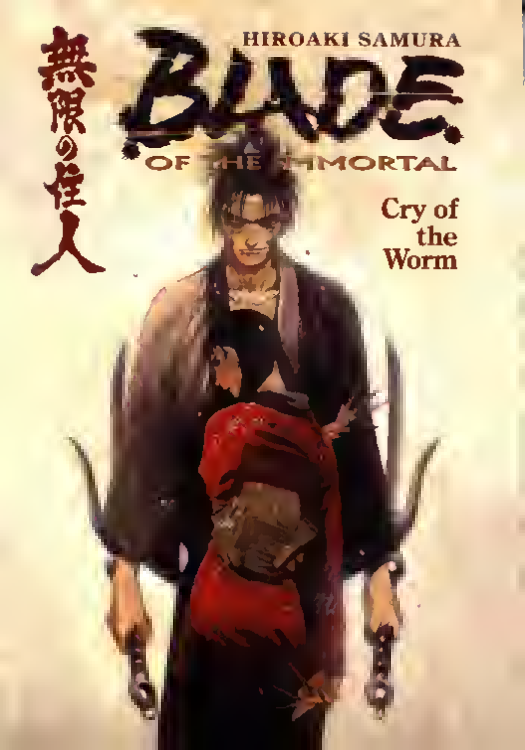
HIROAKI SAMURA

無限の住人

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Cry of the Worm



BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Cry of the Worm

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English version produced by Studio Proteus
for Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL Vol. 2: CRY OF THE WORM
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This book collects issues seven through eleven of the Dark Horse comic-book series, *Blade of the Immortal*.

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story
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translation
Dana Lewis & Toren Smith

lettering and retouch
Wayne Truman & Tomoko Saito

Cry of the Worm

DARK HORSE COMICS®

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Swastika

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal* Manji has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastike* (meaning "welfare," from su — "well" + asti — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika* which moves in a counterclockwise direction and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The arms of the swastika, which point in a clockwise direction, are generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night and often for magical practices. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. These meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

The Artwork

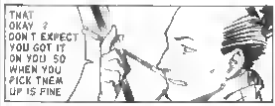
The creator of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally all of our manga are first copied in a mirror image in order to facilitate the left to right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel to panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror images of panels or pages were used.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue

Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, we decided to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English...however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

WELL, WELL, WELL...
NOW AIN'T THESE INTERESTING TOYS.
WE ONLY HAVE TWO DAYS SO
DON'T WORRY YOURSELF DARLIN'. I DON'T CALL MYSELF A SWORD POLISHER FOR NOTHIN
JUST ONE QUESTION THOUGH. WHO DO THESE REALLY BELONG TO?
YOUR DAD? YOUR HUSBAND?
EH?!
OH. NO IT'S NOT I MEAN
HMM FOUT WHAT I FIGURED
NO ONE ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WOULD CARRY GEAR LIKE THIS
IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE I GOT INTO THIS LINE OF WORK. HON
AND IT'S A RARE DAY I SEE SWORDS THAT STINK SO BAD OF FOLKS' GUTS
NO REGULAR SAMURAI COULD GET AWAY WITH IT WAY I SEE IT. HE HAS TO BE A BANDIT?
OR MEBBE A MURDERER?
HYA HEE HEE! DON'T MAKE NO NEVERMIND TO ME, DARLIN'!
I'LL ASK YOU NO MORE QUESTIONS, AND YOU'LL TELL ME NO LIES! SWORDS ARE MADE FOR KILLING, RIGHT?
AH, EE. RIGHT! HA HA HA...
KANK
OOF!

NOW THEN MISSY
POLISHING ALL THESE IS GONNA COST YOU TWO RYO


THAT OKAY ? DON'T EXPECT YOU GOT IT ON YOU SO WHEN YOU PICK THEM UP IS FINE

WHOA! WAIT

AH HA I SEE YOU KNOW YOUR SWORDS YOUNG LADY
I'M IN LOVE WITH THAT LITTLE DARLING MYSELF. JUST LOOK AT IT -CHINESE. EH? MUST HAVE COME IN THROUGH OLD EZO

IF YOU WANT TO MEET THE OWNER WE SHOULD BE HERE ANY TIME NOW I FIGURE
THIS SWORD'S
OWNER ?
YEAH ONE OF THE GUYS WITH THAT SWORD SCHOOL EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT Y'KNOW?
AW COME ON YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT 'EM WHAT ARE THEY CALLED AGAIN ?
OH YEAH THE ITTO RYU EH?
OH HO! THERE YOU ARE! BEEN WAITING FOR YA!

WOMAN !
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING ?!

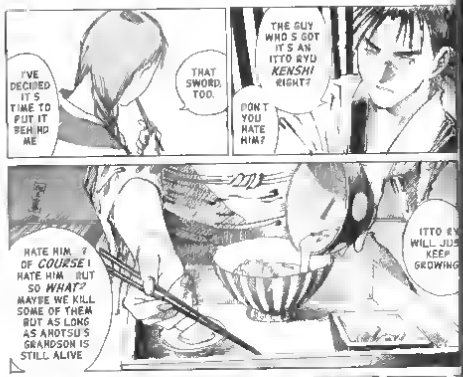
EH?! AH HEH HEH! YOUNG MISSY WERE SHE'S POWERFUL INTERESTED IN SWORDS!
SILLY THING WAS TAKEN BY THIS BLADE OF YOURS SIR! HA HA
I SEE
VERY WELL. THEN
HMM
EXCELLENT WORK CHINESE SWORDS ARE FINE WEAPONS BUT THEY DON'T BEHAVE LIKE JAPANESE SWORDS
THEY'RE TOO MUCH FOR MOST PEOPLE TO HANDLE OF COURSE. THAT'S ALSO WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THEM
THANK YOU SIR A SWORD PIL SHER PUTS IT ON THE LINE WHEN HE GETS A MASTERPIECE LIKE THAT TO WORK ON I WAS SWEATING BLOOD AND NO MISTAKE
BUT SWEAT JUST MAKES THE COOL OF THE EVENING ALL THE MORE PLEASANT EH?
YOU'RE A MAN WHO KNOWS HOW TO LIVE
I'LL WORK WITH YOU AGAIN SOMEDAY
LOOK FORWARD TO IT SIR!
NOW YOUNG LADY AS I WAS SAYIN HUH?!

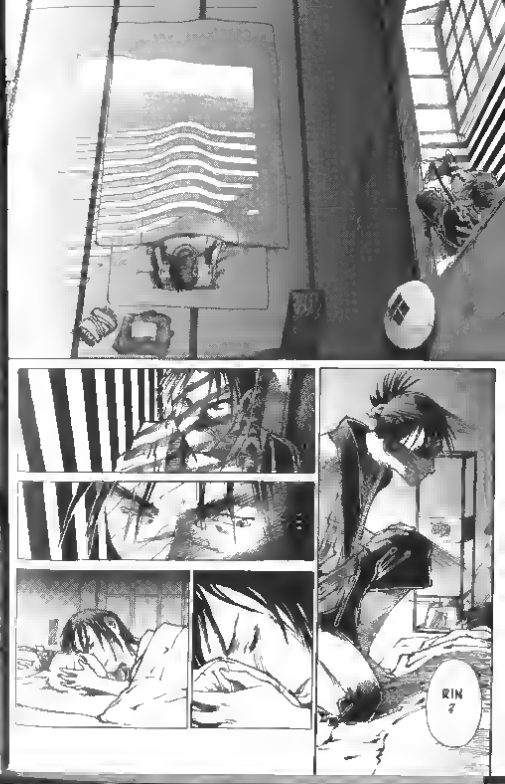
SAMURAI !
SIR!!
THAT
?
PLEASE SELL ME THAT SWORD !!
I'LL PAY I CAN PAY
THIRTY RYÔ!
PLEASE SIR ! BEG YOU!
I'M NOT A SAMURAI
I'M JUST A KENSHI *
YOUNG WOMAN
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A DOJO THAT USED TO BE IN THE HONSHO DISTRICT THE ASANO DOJO?
!!
Y
YES.

WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW FOR THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF THE HEAD OF THAT DOJO. SHE'S GONE MISSING
I WON'T SELL THIS SWORD NOT FOR ALL THE MONEY YOU CAN OFFER
I CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE GOT IT BUT IT'S A KIND OF TROPHY OF WAR
BUT, IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE TO FIND THAT GIRL, IF YOU CAN DO THAT
THEN I JUST MIGHT CONSIDER SELLING IT
WELL 2

RIN WAVE YOU GOT ANY IDEA
HOW MUCH MONEY PRETTY RYO IS?
HEY I CAN TAKE BEING BROKE I'M USED TO IT
BUT YOU- IF WE DIDN'T HAVE A COIN TO OUR NAME, COULD YOU HANDLE AN EMPTY STOMACH NEVER TAKING A BATH ALL THAT CRAP?
I- I'M SORRY MANJI
WELL. HELL. YOU DIDN'T BLOW IT, AFTER ALL. AND IT'S YOUR MONEY ANYWAY BUT TELL ME...
WHY THE HELL DID YOU SUDDENLY WANT SOMEONE ELSE'S SWORD?
IT'S NOT "SOMEONE ELSE'S SWORD!"

THAT SWORD. IT
IT BELONGED TO MY FATHER
THAT SWORD WAS ONE OF THEM
AND SO WHAT IE IT YOU WANT TO DO?
D YOU ASK WHERE HIS GUY S NAY NO?
YOU WANT TO TAKE IT BACK BY FORCE I'M W LLING TO E P
ME SA D HE'D BE STAYING AT AN INN NEAR ASAKUSA. THE "TAKIGUCHI HILL BE THERE UNTIL TOMORROW BUT
MANJI I'M SORRY
I'M ALREADY SIXTEEN! I'VE GOT TO GROW UP
I CAN'T KEEP TALKING ABOUT MY MOTHER AND FATHER... IT'S PATHETIC...
THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL TALK LIKE THIS
ORIGINALLY IT WAS GRANDFATHER S THEY TOLD ME THAT WHEN GRANDPA TAKAYUKI WAS STILL NEAR BY THE MANJI HE HAD T BE DISPLAY T WAS H S SPECIAL TREASURE
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WAS SO WEIRD BUT MUTENICHI RYU SCHOOL WAS SO STRICT ABOUT BOOM BUT GRANDPA'S TREASURE WAS A FOREIGN SWORD
MAYBE IT WAS A GESTURE HIS WAY OF SHOWING RESPECT TO ANOTSU SABURO
TWO YE AGO AF FATHER KILLED THE SWO IN THE O STOL


I'VE DECIDED IT'S TIME TO PUT IT BEHIND ME
THAT SWORD, TOO.
THE GUY WHO'S GOT IT'S AN ITTO RYU KENSHI RIGHT?
DON'T YOU HATE HIM?
HATE HIM ? OF COURSE I HATE HIM BUT SO WHAT? MAYBE WE KILL SOME OF THEM BUT AS LONG AS AHOTSU'S GRANDSON IS STILL ALIVE
ITTO RY WILL JUS KEEP GROWING
NO MORE WASTING TIME I'VE GOT TO MEET AHOTSU HIMSELF
AND AS SOON AS POSS BLE
WELL IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT
FINE BY ME


RIN ?

HMPH

THE ONLY THING SHE'S GOT AN UP ABOUT IS EATING AND CRYING
SHE CALLS THAT PUTTING THINGS BEHIND HER? SHIT
AH. WELL
GUESS THAT'S JUST THE WAY SHE IS.

SAW YOUR FACE ON A WANTED POSTER
FORMER RETA NER FOR A DAIMYO EH?
COULD VE SWORN I SAID YOUR CRIME WAS "ONE HUNDRED MURDERS."
IT S TOO DAMN COLD TONIGHT I DON T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME FOR
BUT LET S GET IT OVER WITH QUICK MISTER MANJI
HEY IT S NOTHING SPECIAL PAL
I JUST WANT YOU TO FIGHT ME !
HUH ? WHY ?
I VE GOT MY REASONS
AND IF I WIN
I LL TAKE THAT CHINESE SWORD OF YOURS!
HEH HEH HEH
HEH HEH
BWA HAHA HAW!!
THIS IS GREAT!
SO I WAS RIGHT! THAT GIRL REALLY IS ASAHO S DAUGHTER! AM I RIGHT OR WHAT EH MAHJI OLD PAL?!
SHE WAS SCARED SHITLESS SO I SORTA FIGURED IT OUT
I WAS WAITING FOR HER TO COME AFTER ME
GUESS SHE FIGURES SHE CAN T BEAT ME SO SHE HIRES SOMEONE ELSE TO DO IT FOR HER HUH?
OKAY FRIEND. IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING YEAH THIS IS ASAHO S SWORD I TOOK IT

HEY. I'M IMPRESSED. BUT I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D CUT THE GEAR
SO. HOW ABOUT IT?! ARE YOU COMING DOWN OR WHAT?!

HEH HEH

KANGG

AH?!
HEH

FIRST RULE OF WAR
—BE STRICTING YOUR ENEMY'S MOBILITY IS EIGHTY PERCENT OF VICTORY
GET IT? IT MEANS DUMBSHITS WHO ONLY STRIKE TO KILL ARE LIKELY TO LOSE THEIR LEGS!
THANKS FOR THE TIP!
SNAK!

A HIDDEN BLADE?!
STOP ACTING SO SURPRISED!
HAAH!
FRAK
HUH..
HUH..
HER HEH
HUHH..

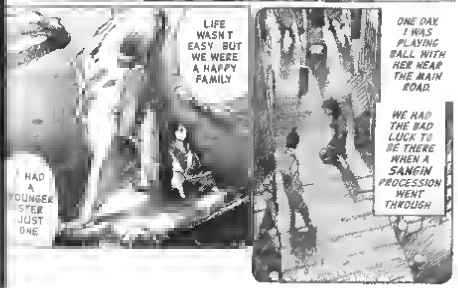
THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN MISSING... THIS IS HOW TO FIGHT!
I LIKE YOU, PAL!
YEAH WELL YOU SURPRISED ME
BUT I'M KIND OF USED TO THINGS LIKE THIS
HEH HEH HEH
HEH...
DAMN ARE ALL YOU TYO RYU GUYS THIS TOUGH?
MAGATSU TAITO!
YOU'RE THE FIRST OUTSIDE OUR DOJO CHILDREN KILL THAT WAY
SORRY PAL CHECK MATE
BUT YOU WON'T DODGE THE NEXT ONE
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?! I'LL SAY A PRAYER FOR YOU WHEN YOU'RE DEAD!
AN YOU MEAN THIS?
SKCCH
YOU KNOW THIS PLACE BRINGS BACK MEMORIES
NOTHING'S CHANGED! NOT A THING
I WAS BORN HERE IN SENZOKU VILLAGE
MY OLD NOME'S NOT A STONE'S THROW AWAY
THIS FOREST WAS THE PERFECT PLAYGROUND FOR A KID MY PALS AND I CAME HERE ALL THE TIME
?

WHEN I WAS ONLY ABOUT FOUR YEARS OLD
THERE WAS A HUGE FLOOD ALL AROUND THIS AREA-- THAT'S WHY THE TREES ARE DEAD FOR SOME REASON THE WATER NEVER DRAINED OUT OF THIS END OF THE WOODS
THE WHOLE THING TURNED INTO A SWAMP
NOW REMEMBER WHERE IT WAS--
ONE OF MY FRIENDS DIDN'T KNOW THAT HE CAME DOWN HERE ALONE
AND WHEN I FOUND HIM HE WAS DEAD
SUCKED INTO THE BOG
SAD STORY HUH, ? A NATURAL TRAP YOU'D NEVER KNOW TO LOOK AT IT
--THERE! RIGHT WHERE YOU'RE STANDING, FOOL!
AAAH!!
I SUDDENLY WANT TO TELL HIM OUR BUSINESS ABOUT!
BWA HA HA HA
I GUESS YOU'RE NOT USED TO FIGHTING IN PLACES LIKE THIS
ANYWAY THANKS FOR LISTENING TO MY STORY

SECOND RULE OF WAR
HE WHO HOLDS THE LAND CAN CONQUER HEAVEN!
MY FIRST MOVE WAS KNOCKING YOU TOWARD THE TREE
AND YOU WENT LIKE A GOOD BOY
RIGHT THERE JUST A FEW YARDS BETWEEN US
RUNE THE SANZU NO KAWA THE RIVER OF THE DEAD!
SHIT !
SLASH
HEH GIVING IT A GOOD TRY, I SEE ACTUALLY YOU KNOW
..IT S PROBABLY NOT TOO LATE
BUT --!
THUNK
KANG

—SO MUCH FOR THAT!

CHOK
MAY AS WELL FINISH MY STORY EH?
I'M THE SON OF PEASANTS

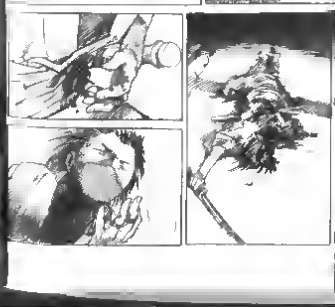

LIFE WASN'T EASY, BUT WE WERE A HAPPY FAMILY
I HAD A YOUNGER SISTER JUST ONE
ONE DAY, I WAS PLAYING BALL WITH HER NEAR THE MAIN ROAD.
WE HAD THE BAD LUCK TO BE THERE WHEN A SANGIN PROCESSION WENT THROUGH

MY SISTER KICKED THE BALL WRONG IT STARTLED THE DAIMYÔ'S HORSE TO PUNISH HER
THEY CUT HER IN TWO! HEH, HEH...
BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES HUH? THEY DO THAT TO US PEASANTS
AND WE CAN'T PROTEST CAN'T COMPLAIN SO WHO'S GONNA JUDGE THE SAMURAI? WHO LOOKS OUT FOR US?!
YOU USED TO BE SAMURAI MY ENEMY
AND THAT GIRL YOU'RE HELPING HER TOO
I'M GOING TO GO KILL HER NOW
MAYBE IF YOU'D ONLY LOST ONE OF YOUR OWN FAMILY
YOU'D UNDER STAND NOW I FEEL

YOU

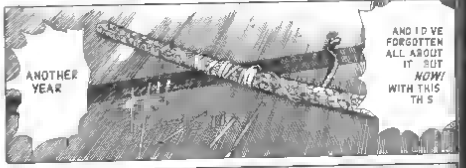
YOU'RE NOT
THE ONLY TRAGIC HERO

DAMNED IF I
LET YOU K.I.L. ME
TWICE !


UHD
HEH HEH HHNG

YOU SAID, YOU'RE "KIND OF USED TO THINGS LIKE THIS" ?
USED TO IT?!
HAH! HA HA HA!
IT'S BEEN REAL INTERESTING MASTER MANJI
WE GOTTA DO THIS AGAIN SOMETIME
FWAK
ASSUMING BOTH OF US LAST OUT THE NIGHT
DAMN IT HURTS
WHAM
MANJI !
THIS
IT WAS OUTSIDE MY ROOM WHEN I GOT UP

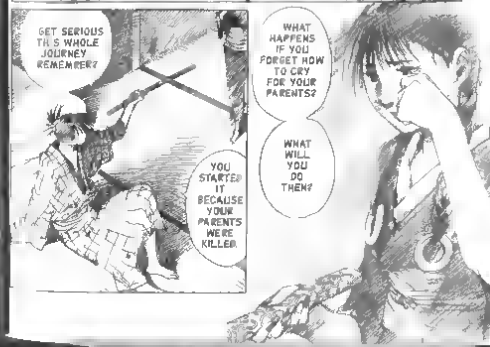
WHEN YOU WENT AND BLEW THEIRS AND AFTER ALL?
DON'T ACT STUPID! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?!
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU IT DECIDED TO PUT IT BEHIND ME!
WHO ASKED YOU TO DO THAT. HUH? WHO?


ANOTHER YEAR
AND I'D'VE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT. BUT NOW! WITH THIS TH S

ALL THAT PAIN FOR A STUPID SWORD! FOR A SPOILED LITTLE BRAT—!
WH— WHAT IF YOU'D BEEN KILLED?! HOW COULD I EVER

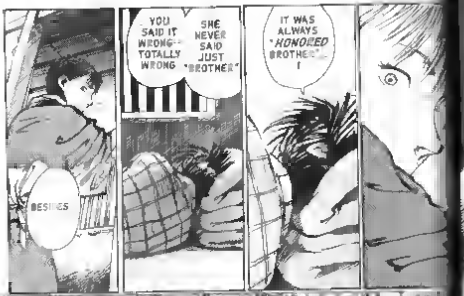
WHY'D YOU DO IT?
YOU STUPID, STUPID...
OKAY I'LL TOSS IT
UH? AH!!

LOOK RIN


GET SERIOUS TH S WHOLE JOURNEY REMEMBER?
YOU STARTED IT BECAUSE YOUR PARENTS WERE KILLED.
WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FORGET HOW TO CRY FOR YOUR PARENTS?
WHAT WILL YOU DO THEN?

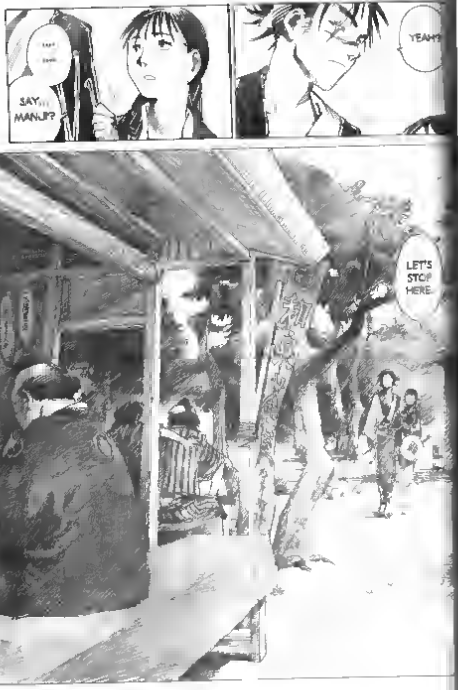
SUBE THE MEMORIES HURT BUT IF YOU CAN HOLD ON TO THEM
SOME TIMES THEY CAN MAKE YOU STRONG AS STEEL
YEAH THIS TIME
THAT'S WHAT SAVED MY ASS
SO JUST ACCEPT IT HELL YOU'LL BE GOING TO FORGET THEM SOON ENOUGH AS IT IS
WHY GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN? WHAT A PAIN IN THE BUTT
BUMB OF BROTHER !

HEY... WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
OH, YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME?
TOUGH, I'M NOT GOING TO SAY IT AGAIN
I LOOK LIKE HER, RIGHT? YOUR LITTLE SISTER. IT'S NOT FAIR! JUST ME CRYING ALL THE TIME
IF YOU'RE STILL SO ATTACHED TO HER, YOU CRY FOR ONCE! LET'S SEE YOU CRY MANJI—
YOU STUPID LITTLE IDIOT
UP!
THE HELL I'M GONNA CRY! I'M NOT A SNOT NOSED LITTLE KID LIKE YOU!
SHUT UP AND GET OUT!
CLOSE THAT DOOR AND DON'T WAKE ME UP UNTIL LUNCH!
I'M SORRY !

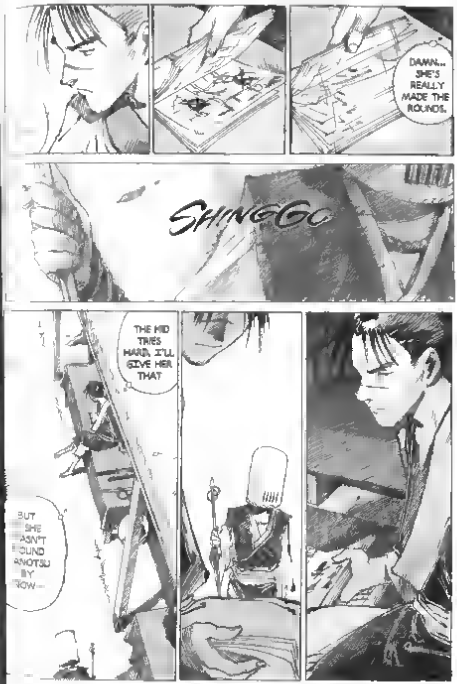


CRY OF THE WORM

Part 1: Path of Fire

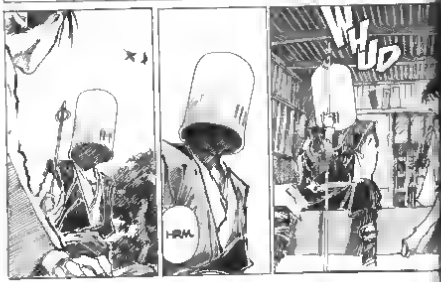

SAY...!!! MANJI?
YEAH?
LET'S STOP HERE.
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE LEFT THE INN?
ABOUT— MAYBE, UM... THIRTY MINUTES?
NOW LOOK HERE, RIN.
IF YOU ADD UP...
THE INN, THE MEALS...
THIS MAP HERE PLUS THE FERRYBOAT FARE WELL...
I SEEM TO REMEMBER IT WAS YOU WHO SAID WE SHOULD CUT OUT EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE ESSENTIALS, EH?
SEE TEA AND SOME SWEET CAKES SHOULD HARDLY MATTER, RIGHT?
HEY! YOU VETOED MY SAKE LAST NIGHT, REMEMBER?!
YEAH... GUESS I DID. SORRY
AW HELL. I'LL MAKE UP FOR IT WITH SOME TEA.

EXCUSE ME. WE'LL HAVE A HAKARI SWEET CAKE AND SOME BARLEY TEA.
THE BATH-ROOM IS JUST OUT BACK DEAR.
AH HAH! I THOUGHT SO! WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST COME OUT AND SAY IT?
MEH.
SO, WHAT'S UP? YOU GOT THE RUNS? OR IS IT YOUR PERIOD?
NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS!
YEAH? CARE? WHAT IT IS, ASH-WHY?


DAMN... SHE'S REALLY MADE THE ROUNDS.
SHINEGO
THE KID TRIES HARD, I'LL GIVE HER THAT
BUT SHE WASN'T FOUND ANYTHING BY NOW--

HEY, PAL!

YOU'RE BLOCKING THE DAMN LIGHT!
IF YOU'RE NOT SITTING DOWN, THEN MOVE YOUR ASS, MONK MAN!


HRM.
HUD

HRMM...
...

THAT'S INTERESTING READING YOU'VE GOT THERE...
...YOUNG MAN.

IT'S JUST A DAMN MAP
AH, YES. BUT THOSE MARKS...
THOSE ARE THE SITES OF FENCING DOJO ALL OVER EDO.

AND ALL OF THEM, MY BOY...
...ARE DOJO THAT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO HEEL BY A MAVERICK FACTION.

HO... ...
YOU'RE PRETTY UP ON THIS STUFF FOR A MAN OF THE CLOTH.
HEH HEH HEH. THERE'S STILL MORE I KNOW YOUNGSTER.
I KNOW ABOUT THAT MAN YOU TWO ARE SEEKING.
YOU'LL NEVER MEET HIM THIS WAY. NOT IF YOU WALK ALL YEAR.
BUT AS FOR WHERE YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY FIND ANOTSU KAGEHISA...
.. WELL.. DEPENDING ON HOW YOU ANSWER ME...
.. I MIGHT POSSIBLY BE INCLINED TO TELL YOU.
HMM! NOW JUST A SECOND, PAL.
HOW COME YOU KNOW SO DAMN MUCH?!
UJI TEA!
YES,SIR! UJI TEA COMING RIGHT UP. GOOD SIR!
ONE BARLEY TEA, SIR.
SOME SAKURA-MOCHI TOO, IF YOU PLEASE
OH, WE'RE PLUMB OUT OF SAKURA-MOCHI, SIR, BUT OUR KASHIWA CAKES ARE MIGHTY FINE
ALL RIGHT. THEN, ONE OF THOSE.
AND YOUR WARIGU CAKE!
I'M SORRY I KEPT YOU WAITING, SIRS. I SURELY AM!
!?
SO— HOW'D YOU KNOW?
HMM...?

AS FOR THOSE MARKS ON YOUR MAP BEING ABOUT...
ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE STREETS OF THE CITY WOULD NOTICE SOON ENOUGH.
AND ALSO NOTICE THAT THEY ALL BELONG TO THE ITTO-RYU
THOSE YOUNGSTE... HAVE A L... OF ENEMI... THEY DO... WHAT WI... THEIR VIOLEN... WAYS.
THERE'S NO END T... THE RASCA... WHO WOULD LIKE TO AMBUSH ANOT... KAGEHISA AN... CUT HIM DOWN.
ANYONE WOULD NOTICE THAT SOON ENOUGH!
OU I LOOK THE PLOVING ART RSELF UING AN.
WELL SHIT.
BWAHAHA!
AIN'T THIS AMUSING! A MONK DETECTIVE!
I'M GLAD OU LEARNED OMETHING FROM ALL OUR WALK- NG AROUND! HAW HAW HAW!
HEH, HEH... YEAH... I GET IT NOW. SO...
...BUT ONE MORE QUESTION.

YOU SAID TWO OF US HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR ANOTSU.
HOW'D YOU KNOW I'M NOT ALONE?
LET'S HEAR YOU EXPLAIN AWAY THAT ONE, EH?
HEH.
SORRY... I'LL DISPENSE WITH THE FORMALITIES
YOU MUST BE MANJI, YES?
WHAT'S WITH THE "YOUNG MAN" CRAP? YOU'VE ONLY GOT TEN YEARS ON ME, MAX.

I AM ITTO-RYU SWORDSMAN.
...EIKU SHIZUMA.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I COME UNARMED.
YOUR WHOLE BODY, MAN...
IT STINKS OF BLOOD.
HELL, I KNEW YOU WERE NO MONK...
THE SECOND YOU STOPPED IN FRONT OF ME
KWAK
SO FAR I'VE KILLED ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT MEN, BUT YOU.
JUST GUESSING, MIND YOU...
YOU, I FIGURE...
GOTTA BE TEN TIMES THAT, RIGHT?
WHAT THE HELL... DON'T MEAN SHIT TO ME BUT TELL ME PAL...
YOU REALLY FIGURE YOU OUGHTTA BE SHOOTING YOUR MOUTH OFF LIKE THAT?
I MEAN, IF YOU HADN'T GONE AND BLABBED, WE STILL WOULDN'T KNOW ANOTSU'S WHOLE NAME
"BLABBED"...? SEEMS TO ME HIS NAME IS ALL I'VE TOLD YOU IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

IT'S LIKE I SAID BEFORE.
YOU GIVE ME THE RIGHT ANSWER, AND I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT THE ITTO-RYU!
SO CUT THE CRAP.
ASK AWAY, PAL!
TELL ME... HAVEN'T YOU EVER WANTED FOLLOWERS OF YOUR OWN?
WELL...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WE CU DOWN ANOTH
DON'T GET ME WRONG. IT'S NOT LIKE I HATE HIM. FAR FROM IT.
THAT "WAY OF THE SWORD" HE PREACHES... I RESPECT HIM FOR THAT.
THE ESSENCE OF ITTO-RYU? BEGINS WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL OTHER SCHOOLS OF SWORDFIGHTING.
"WIPE AWAY ALL THE DISTINCTIONS, THE FACTIONS, THE SUB-FACTIONS! SELECT ONLY THE VERY FINEST TECHNIQUES, PROVEN IN EVERY KIND OF BATTLE..."
"...THEN USE THEM TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE SCHOOL OF THE SWORD. THE OLD SWORD SCHOOLS OF THE SAMURAI FAMILIES ARE JUST HOLLOW SHELLS.
IF WE CAN PULL THIS OFF, IT'LL BE A REVOLUTION."

"BUT YOU KNOW...
ANY IDEAL IS A MEANING-LESS DREAM IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT HAPPEN!
ANOTSU KAGEHISA. YEAH, HE'S A MIND OF GENIUS, ALL RIGHT
HIS SWORD-WORK, JUDGS MEN BOTH FA BEYOND YEARS. IS TRUE EXTRA ORDINA
BUT NO MATTER HOW STRONG HE IS, A HUMAN BEING IS STILL A HUMAN BEING.
THERE'S GUARANT HE WON DIE BEFO ME MA THE DRE HAPP
IT TAKES SOMEONE WITH BOTH THE SKI... AN THE TIME ACHIEVE TH DREAM, N MATTER WHAT HAPPENS
THAT'S A REAL LEADER. AM I WRONG?
OU ARD ABOUT ME ROM HAT GUY KAGATSU, ON'T YOU?
ME AND MY LITTLE SECRET
INDEED I DO. HE PRAISED YOUR SWORDWORK TO THE SKIES.
YOUR SWORD-WORK
...AND YOUR IMMORTAL FLESH!
ME. YOU. WE CAN'T BEAT ANOTSU BY OUR SELVES.
BUT THE TWO OF US TOGETHER...

IT'S BEEN VERY INTERESTING...
...SO I GUESS I'LL LET YOU LIVE... NOW BEAT IT!
THAT'S YOUR ANSWER...? IT'S NOT A BAD DEAL FOR YOU...
...OR FOR ME SO WHY...?
CALL IT INTUITION, OR MAYBE JUST THE SMELL OF IT
YOU AND I, WE'RE THE SAME BREED.
WE'RE KILLERS AND LOVING IT
WOW! THE FIRST CAR! THIS IS FANTASTIC!
YEAH. THERE ARE A FEW OF US AROUND.
WE DON'T KNOW WE'RE ALIVE UNTIL WE SEE BLOOD FLOWING.
HELL, IT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
BUT, PAL... YOU BETTER GIVE UP ON THAT IDEA OF BEING NUMBER-ONE HONCHO.
HEY?
WHEN PEOPLE LIKE US GET INTO POWER...
...IT ALWAYS MEANS ONLY ONE THING...
—MASS MURDER!

HEH.
SHING
WE COULD RULE THE WORLD. WELL... TOO BAD.
IF YOU AND I WORKED TOGETHER...
HEH HEH HEH.
ALL THE MORE REASON, MANJI.
BUT YOU KNOW, FOR A GUY THEY CALL THE "ONE-HUNDRED MAN MURDERER," YOU'VE GOT A REAL CONSCIENCE.
QUITE A SURPRISE.

THANKS.
WHO SAYS I'M PRAISING YOU?! I THOUGHT YOU AND I WOULD UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.
IT'S A DAMN SHAME

PHEW...

FAP
MAMA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD'VE KNOCKED THE TRAY OUT OF THE WAY TOO, EH?
WHAT THE HELL WAS HE THINKING?
COMING AT ME WITH A DAGGER WHEN HE KNEW I'M IMMORTAL... VERY STRANGE

AAH, WHAT A SHAME
WHAT WAS HE? ??TTO-RYO?
YEAH. BUT Y'KNOW...
THESE DAYS IT SEEMS I'M MORE FAMOUS THAN YOU ARE
I'M SORRY— THIS IS ALL MY FAULT
FORGET IT! IT'S A LOT EASIER THAN WORRYING ABOUT SAVING YOUR SKIN.
I GOT A BOUNTY ON MY HEAD, REMEMBER?
SORRY 'BOUT THIS, DARLIN'
I'LL PAY FOR THE DEAD GUY'S TEA.
?

I... I'LL SAY IT...
ONE MORE TIME.
YOU AND I. WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.
WAS IT THAT OLD HAG?
?
C'MON...YOU DIDN'T GET 'EM DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TIBET OR NOTHING. AND THERE CAN'T BE *THAT* MANY PEOPLE WANDERING AROUND STUFFED WITH *KESSEN-CHU*
I'M ASKING IF YAGIKUN GOT TO YOU.
SHE HAD TATTOOS ON HER CHEEKS AND FOREHEAD.
KANG!
IT WAS AN OLD LAMA NUN.
NO-- *NO WAY!* SHE WOULDN'T! NOT HER!
SHE CAN'T BE HELPING THE *ITTO-RYU*--?!

YOU GOT IT WRONG, KID. WHEN I WAS GIVEN THE WORMS...
IT WAS LONG BEFORE ANYONE EVER DREAMED OF THE ITTO-RYU
HO! AND JUST HOW LONG BEFORE?
EH?
MAYBE 200 YEARS.
TWO HUNDRED
BUT THAT WAS STILL THE MUROMACHI PERIOD!
DAMN RIGHT! WITH THESE EYES.
...I'VE SEEN THE DYNASTIES FALL!!

I'VE TAKEN FIVE WOMEN TO BE MY WIFE AND I'VE HAD MORE BEST FRIENDS THAN THAT
BUT THEY'RE GONE, ALL OF THEM, GONE ON BEFORE ME...
DEATH IS MERCILESS. BUT LET ME TELL YOU.
...NOT BEING ABLE TO DIE IS CRUELER STILL.
?!
BUT... THERE IS SOMETHING THAN CAN BE DONE ABOUT THAT
MANJI
I'LL JUST LET YOUR ANSWER REST FOR THE TIME BEING. BUT REMEMBER...

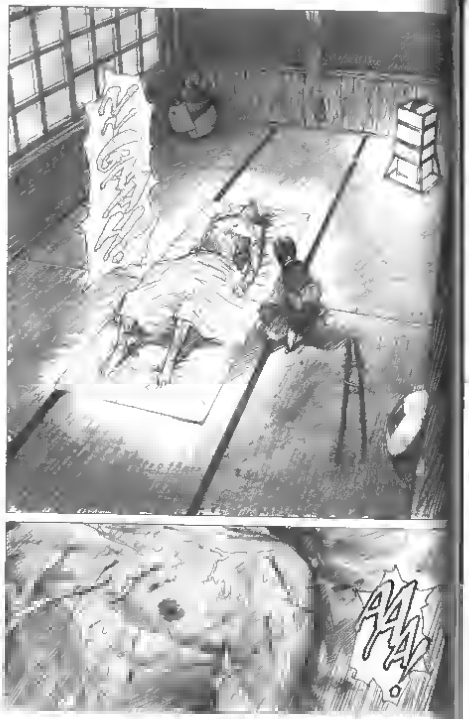
...NOTHING IN THIS WORLD LIVES FOREVER, AND WE ARE NO EXCEPTION.
AS YOU'LL FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF... TONIGHT
WHAT THE HELL...?
SINGG
22

TH-TH-THAT MAN... WH-WHAT IS HE?!
UHH...
MANJI
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY?!
NOW THAT'S WEIRD...
THE WORMS... THEY HAVEN'T COME OUT!

AAAGH!!
HUNG AH!
NNGH. UHUH.
OH GEEZ...
K-KIN...
G-GET...
...GET THE HELL OUT...!
HNGGG!
SPLAT
HNNG
HHP.
OH, M-MY...
G-GOD...
SPK!
SPK!
SPK!
AAAGH!!
EEEK!
MANJI!!!

CRY OF THE WORM

Part 2: Path of Blood


AHH

NO... OH, NO!
MANJI! YOUR SCARS!
THEY'RE OPENING UP AGAIN!
H-HEH-HEH.
GOOD JOB, PAL.
TH-THAT DAMN SHIZUMA EIKU-- ME DID THIS!

P-POISON?
YEAH, GOTTA BE.
PROBABLY--THAT DAGGER THIS MORNING...
MOST POISONS. I COULDN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT...
BUT THIS ONE...
HRKK!?
HKSHH!
M-MANJI!
WELL. SHIT
RIN! LISTEN! I'LL DIE DON'T--
DON'T GO AFTER ANOTSU ALONE! FIND ANOTHER--
SO THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE EH?
SHUT UP!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT! I WON'T!

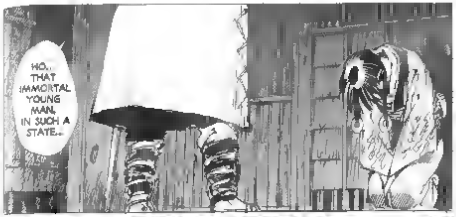
DAMN PILLS... WON'T HELP— UNDERSTAND?
DON'T EVEN KNOW... WHAT THE POISON IS—
JUST DO IT!
TAKE THEM! DO IT NOW!
HEY...?! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?!
TO GET YOU A DOC-TOR!
DON'T BE STUPID. A DOCTOR CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR I'M S... AND BESIDES...
...I DON'T WANT YOU GOING OUT ALONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!
...I'LL BRING HIM RIGHT BACK...
RIN!
KTAK!
MANJI— TAKE THESE
UNGG
?
IT'S A... ANTI-DOTE... LEARNT ABOU... FROM M... MOTHE...
THEY'R... PILLS ROLLE... FROM... DOSEI... MOTSUA... AND RENSY...

"GONE TO HOT SPRINGS FOR VACATION. NO EXAM NAT'O UNTIL THE WEEKEND." "KAKUSHI'N' TOWN DOCTOR"

MANJI'S RIGHT ANYWAY— HIS BODY JUST ISN'T NORMAL
THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO FOR HIM.
NOT UNLESS THEY'VE GOT THE SAME KIND OF BODY
SHIZUMA...?
AAAAGHH!!
BUT HE'S THE FAMILY HEAD...
CHILD.
OH NO!

SO.. IT *IS* YOU. SUCH A *LONG* TIME IT'S BEEN...
DO YOU REMEMBER ME CHILD?

WHY ARE YOU CRYING SO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT DEAR ED
HMM?
THE MOON LIGHT IS SO BRIGHT

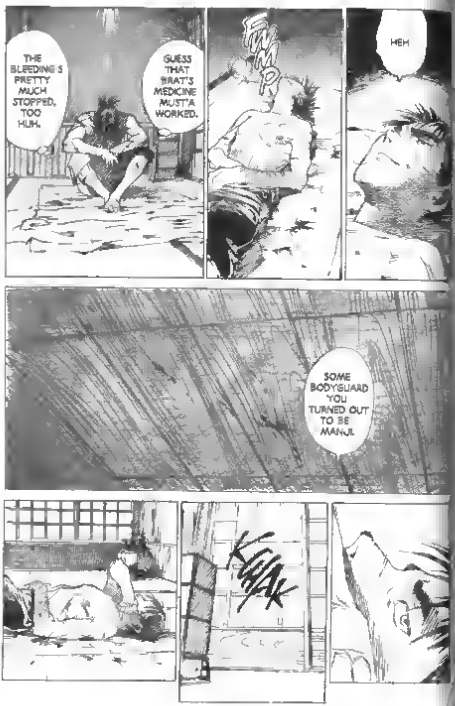

HO.. THAT IMMORTAL YOUNG MAN! IN SUCH A STATE..

I FEEL... IT'S LIKE.. MY HEAD IS SPINNING...
I CAN'T EVEN FIND A *DOC-TOR*...
WHY DID HE HAVE TO COME OUT LOOKING FOR ME NOW?!
KESSEN-CHU.. WAS IT? WHAT *YOU* HAVE YAOBIKUNI.
ISN'T THAT WHAT THE PROBLEM IS..?

SHIZUMA EIKU SUCH AN OLD FAMILIAR NAME IF THIS IS REALLY HIS DOING..
I CAN'T VERY WELL SAY IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.

THERE'S ONLY ONE POISON IN THIS BAG, WIDE WORLD WHAT CAN KILL US, CHILD.
IF HE'S GONE AND GOTTEN A HOLD OF IT NOW, THAT'S TROUBLE
WILL YOU COME WITH ME NOW?
I'LL MIX YOU UP AN ANTI-DOTE
Y- YES, MA AM.
BUT FIRST.
YES ?
WHERE ARE YOUR SANDALS?
I GUESS IT WAS IN SUCH A HURRY
AH—
HEH HEH. PRETTY STUPID HUH?
BE BESIDE MYSELF
REALLY? YOU THINK SO?
BUT I CAN'T LOOK AFTER BOTTY OF YOU IF YOU GET HURT... TOO.
YOU WEAR MY SANDALS, AND CARRY ME ON YOUR BACK, MM?
YES MA AM!
HM?
SHALL WE GALLOP OFF AND GALLOP RIGHT BACK?
SO, BEFORE POOR OLD KANJI DIES IN HIS SLEEP
MA AM. DIDN'T YOU JUST CALL MANJI... JOSHUA OR SOMETHING...?
AM.. ER
COME NOW! WHAT'S IN A NAME, CHILD?!

YOU FORGOT DIDN'T YOU?! CAUGHT YOU.
LAUGH FOR ME YAOBIKUNI. LET ME HEAR YOU CACKLE AGAIN!
HO, HO HO... HYA HA HA.
KYA HA HA HAHA!!
WHEN.
GUESS I WON'T NEED A WOODEN LEG, AFTER ALL.


THE BLEEDING'S PRETTY MUCH STOPPED, TOO HUH.
GUESS THAT BRAT'S MEDICINE MUST'A WORKED.
FWMP
MEH
SOME BODYGUARD YOU TURNED OUT TO BE MANJI.
KUNAK
WHAT KEPT YOU YOU DUMB KIDDY!
AHHH!
AHHH!
WELL, SHIT
UNNG- DAMN-
AHH
AHH

THE BANKS OF THE YOTSUYA OUTER MOA
I'M WAITING.
—SHIZUMA

WHO

RIN, YOU STUPID, CRAZY FOOL!
I TOLD YOU! THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU!

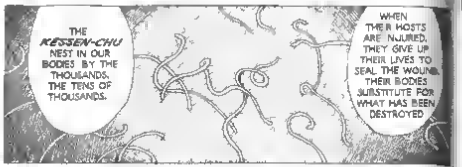
....!
THAT BASTARD!

AH - E- EXCUSE ME. ? I
I LEFT IT WHERE YOU SAID.

I KNOW.

THANK YOU.

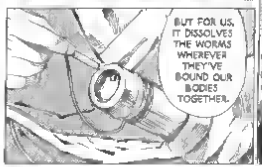
ER...
MY... MY GRANDSON?
AMAZING HOW THEY CAN SLEEP ANYWHERE ISN'T IT?
SHH... IT'S OKAY...
PLEASE. AT THE VERY LEAST... GIVE MANJI THE ANTIDOTE.
THE KESSEN-SATSU POISON.
I FOUND IT BY CHANCE LONG AGO WHEN I WAS WANDERING AROUND TIBET.


THE KESSEN-CHU NEST IN OUR BODIES BY THE THOUSANDS. THE TENS OF THOUSANDS.
WHEN THEIR HOSTS ARE INJURED, THEY GIVE UP THEIR LIVES TO SEAL THE WOUND. THEIR BODIES SUBSTITUTE FOR WHAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

OUR BODIES RELY ON THE "BINDING" OF THESE LOATHSOME CREATURES.
MANJI. TAOBIKUNI MYSELF. OUR IMMORTAL LIVES HANG BY A THREAD OF DEAD WORMS

YOU COULD DRINK THIS POISON AND NOT FEEL A THING.

AND THE PAIN. THAT EXQUISITE PAIN—
UNTIL AT LAST AFTER A TIME OF CONVULSIONS THE OLD WOUNDS REOPEN ALL OVER OUR BODIES.


BUT FOR US, IT DISSOLVES THE WORMS WHEREVER THEY'VE BOUND OUR BODIES TOGETHER.

IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN MORTALLY WOUNDED.
YOU CAN SURVIVE KESSEN-SATSU BUT FOR THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE DIED BEFORE ..

THEN...

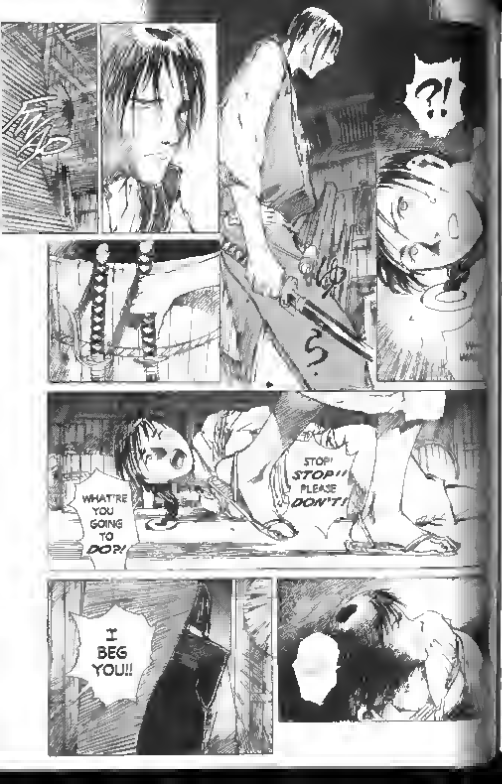
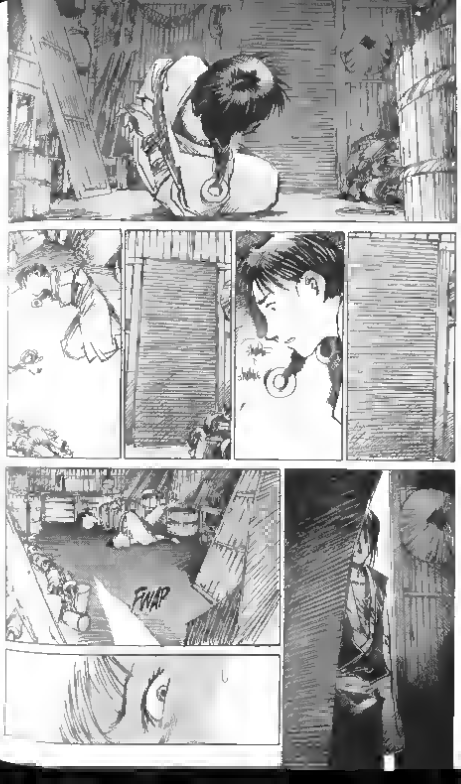
THEN MANJI..?!

NAW DON'T WORRY
THE LITTLE BIT HE GOT PROBABLY WASN'T ENOUGH TO KILL HIM. AND IF IT WAS A LETHAL DOSE—

— THEN HE'S DEAD MEAT BY NOW.
THIS KESSEN-SATSU STUFF—

...IT HAS NO ANTI-DOTE!

SO...I RAN OUT LIKE AN IDIOT AND GOT CAUGHT FOR NOTHING.
AAA...!
I'M SORRY! I AM SO SORRY, YOUNG MISS!
THERE WAS NO CHOICE— I HAD NO CHOICE!
HE THREATENED TO KILL MY GRANDSON!
AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE'D DO--
I GUESS YOU'RE STILL IN YOUR FORTIES. IN THE DARK I COULDN'T TELL.
I'M A FOOL.
ANY-WAY...
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE. THAT'S THE WAY IT IS. PARENTS AND CHILDREN...
THIS GUY... I DOUBT HE'S IN ANY HURRY..
...TO KILL ME.
DEAR.
YOU WAIT! I'LL GO GET HELP..
THIS I SWEAR!


FWAP
?!
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?!
STOP! STOP!! PLEASE DON'T!!
I BEG YOU!!

FWAP

WH-WHAT DID YOU GET OUT OF THAT?! MURDERING HER?!
WHY'D YOU KILL HER? WHY?!
YOU'RE NOT A SAMURAI! YOU HAVE NO HONOR!
YOU DESERVE TO DIE, YOU GUTTER TRASH!
WHAT IS THERE TO CRY ABOUT?
THE WOMAN WAS A TOTAL STRANGER.

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO KILL SOMEONE LIKE THAT?
WHY? SOMEONE WITHOUT EVEN A SWORD.
JUST LIKE MY MOTHER...
YOU— YOU
JUST DON'T GET IT!
WHUD

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW..
THEN I WILL TEACH YOU.
GNNK

"TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WHEN OUR LAND WAS STILL AT WAR.
I SERVED A WARLORD.
"MY WIFE AND MY FRIENDS ALIKE, ALL LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THAT MAN.
"AND I TOO... I MADE MY VERY BODY IMMORTAL TO SERVE HIM.
"I KILLED AT LEAST A THOUSAND MEN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE...
...AND THE AT THE END OF OUR LON STRUGGLE WHAT WE LEFT TO US...?
"THE BRUTAL PEACE OF A WORLD CONQUERED BY TOYOTOMI AND HIS MEN...
...AND THE SEVERED HEAD OF OUR LOR ROLLING IN THE RUINS OF HIS CASTLE.

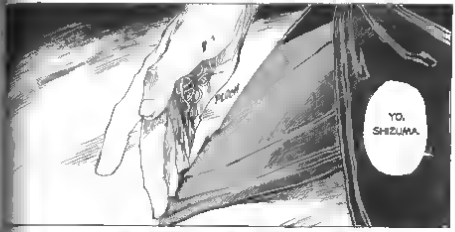
TODAY, NOW THAT TOYOTOMI IS GONE AS WELL, I SOMETIMES WONDER...
...WHO WERE THOSE PEOPLE WHO DIED IN BATTLE?
"THE ONLY ONES WHO LEAVE THEIR NAMES BEHIND THEM ARE A HANDFUL OF OVERLORDS.
...AND THOSE OF US WHO NEVER EVEN ACHIEVED THAT?
"WE WERE NOTHING BUT PAWNS FROM THE DAY WE WERE BORN!
PEASANT SAMURAI ALL THE SAME
ME.
YOU...
EVEN A GREAT WARLORD DEFEATED IN BATTLE IS A WORM, A PITIFUL WORM
MY WIFE AND MY
BORN AS WORMS...
DYING AS WORMS.

LICK IT!
YOU SEE SOMETIMES JUST SOMETIMES, WHEN TWO FRESH WOUNDS PRESS TOGETHER,-
THE BLOOD BECOMES A MEDIUM-- AND THE KESSEN-CHU CAN BE PASSED ON.
THEN YOU'LL FINALLY BE QUALIFIED.
QUALIFIED TO TALK ABOUT THE MAJESTY OF LIFE
NOW, YOU TAKE THE CHANCE
FOR ENDLESS LIFE TO WITNESS ENDLESS DEATH.
DO THAT AND THEN-SOME-DAY...
YOU LL UNDERSTAND WHY IN LIFE OR IN DEATH, THAT WOMAN WASN'T WORTH A SECOND GLANCE
JUST THINK-- IF YOUR FLESH WAS IMMORTAL, HOW EASY TO TAKE REVENGE!

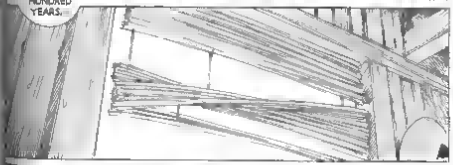
?!
AFRAID...?
AH...

HEY, HEY WHAT HAPPENED IN THIS LITTLE HUT.
M. MANJI!
TO MAKE YOU CRY LIKE THAT?

COME ON OUT AND PLAY!
IT'S A PERFECT MOONLIT NIGHT FOR DEATH RIGHT SHIZUMA?


YO, SHIZUMA.

I'M SURE YOU MUST'VE LEARNED PLENTY IN TWO HUNDRED YEARS.



HOW ABOUT YOU SHOW ME?

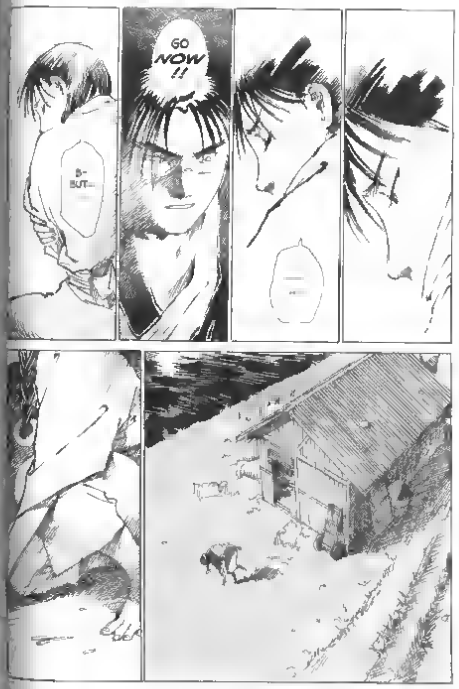
CRY OF THE WORM

Part 28: Path of the Sword

I NEVER EXPECTED MUCH FROM YOU ANYWAY
SO NO MORE CRYING.
IF IT WAS THAT EASY TO PASS ON THE WORMS.
I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO.
LOSE ANYONE

MAYBE YOU COULD CALL IT SATORI ONE DAY I REALIZED THAT
– ALL I HAD REALLY NEEDED, ALL ALONG, WERE PEOPLE JUST LIKE ME.
SORRY, PAL, I'M NOT INTERESTED...
IN BEING YOUR WIFE
POOR KID... JUST LOOK AT THOSE BRUISES.
NASTY GUY. HUMP
MANJI...
THAT OLD WOMAN–

THE ONE OUT FRONT, ALL DONE UP LIKE YAOBI KUNI?
DON'T KNOW WHO THE HELL SHE IS, BUT— SHE'S GONE TO MEET HER MAKER
NO, NO!
THE LITTLE SQUALLER'S OKAY THOUGH.
DON'T WANT HIM DROWNING IN THE RICE PADDY I GUESS
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT HIM, GO GET HIM.
BUT— BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE—
IT'S A LITTLE LATE TO BE AFRAID OF BLOOD, GIRL.
BESIDES, IF YOU STAY HERE YOU'RE GOING TO SEE WORSE
—MUCH WORSE

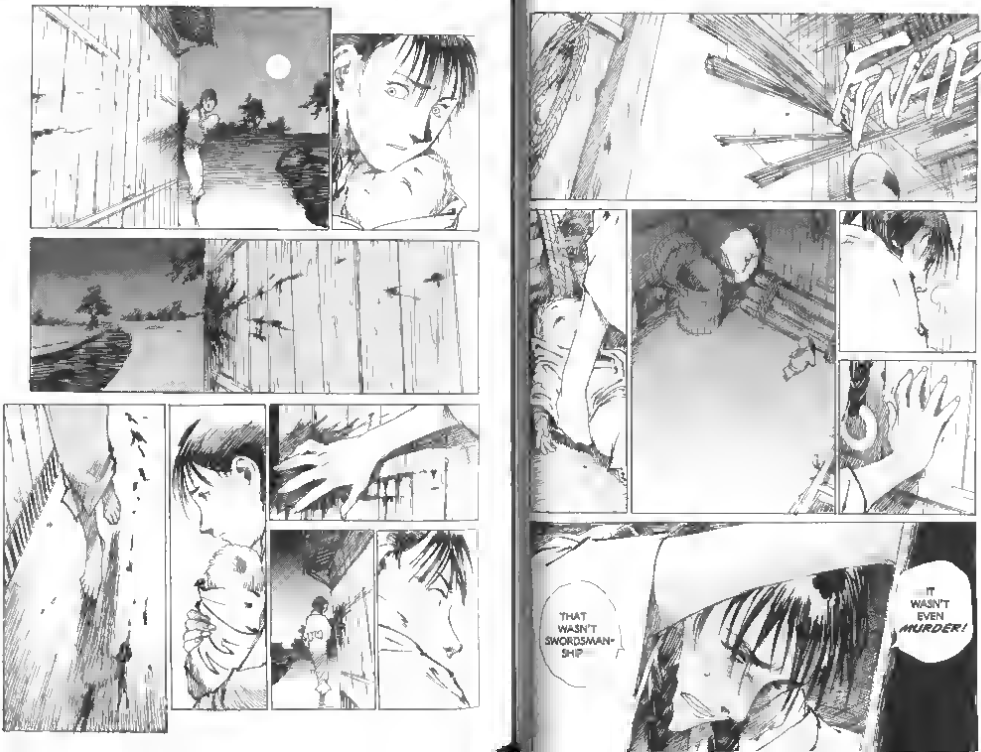

B-BUT...
GO NOW!!

YOU CAN STILL MOVE WHY!?
MOM'S CHICKEN SOUP MAYBE
HEH. HEH.
ALL THOSE RARE MEDICINES I BROUGHT FROM TIBET. NONE OF THEM COULD STOP THE KESSEN SATSU
"CHICKEN SOUP" EH!? VERY FUNNY...
WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER. I WAS IMPATIENT

IF WE'RE BOTH IMMORTAL...
IT WOULDN'T BE RIGHT TO KILL YOU TOO EASY
JUST WHAT I WAS THINKING.
ARE YOU READY SHIZUMA!?
I'VE GOT SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR YOU-- A TASTE OF PAIN...
...SUCH AS MOST PEOPLE COULD NEVER EVEN DREAM OF!
AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.
DRAW!

SHANG-CHI

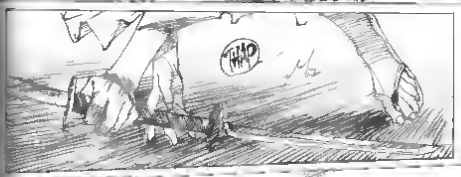
THANK GOD...
I'M SORRY, LITTLE ONE
I'LL GIVE HER A PROPER BURIAL LATER


FNAP
THAT WASN'T SWORDSMANSHIP
IT WASN'T EVEN MURDER!

DEATH. DYING...
SHOULDN'T BE THIS HARD.
THIS PAIN. STRAIGHT THROUGH THE HEART...
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAVOR IT?

I GUESS ALL YOU AND I HAVE IN COMMON...
...IS THE PAIN-- EH, SHIZUMA?
PIK
IF WE CAN'T REACH SOME KIND OF CONCILIATION
SUSHIN
THEN AS FAR AS THE ITTO-RYU IS CONCERNED-- YOU'RE JUST A THREAT!
AND SO...
THE NIGHT IS ALMOST OVER.
FROM HERE ON OUT
--I EXPECT YOU TO BET YOUR LIFE
SNAK
BET MY LIFE EH ?
HOW VERY HUMAN

I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE--
--TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.
WHEN A SAMURAI GIVES HIS WORD... HE STANDS BY IT.
OR THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY. AIN'T IT, PAL?


THUD
THUD

KCHUK!
WHA-?!
VVVHRRRRRR

TANG TANG TANG
KTANG
THAP
PAWING THROUGH A GIRL'S CLOTHES...
FWMP
...BECAUSE YOU LUST FOR HER KNIVES?

THAT AIN'T N- NORMAL
SHIZUMA !!
SHINGG

GIRL, EVEN IF EVERY ONE IS A FATAL STRIKE THEY WON'T HURT ME
SHIZU-MA.
PLEASE JUST DIE
IF YOU'VE LIVED TWO HUNDRED YEARS... AND IN ALL THOSE YEARS...
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN A LEADER...
THEN YOU ARE A WORM, SHIZUMA!
A WORM FOREVER !!

CURTAIN OF DEATH! FLIGHT OF THE GOLDEN WASPS !!
THCK
THOK
DAMN
SHIT! WHERE'D HE-?!

I'M TAKING YOU APART, OLD MAN!

CHOK
CHOK
CHOK
CHOK

KRAK!!!
!!

YOU ALWAYS GO TOO FAR, YOU--!!
PLEASE NO SHOUTING... IT HURTS... MY HEAD.

THE POISON'S STILL IN YOUR SYSTEM!
YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE STILL ISN'T BACK TO NORMAL.
IS THAT IT ? MY HEAD IS PAINING.

KNNG.
KNNK

HEH. KNGK!
KNNK.
HEH! HEH!
KNK-
NNG

HEH... BEHOLD!
SEE WHAT THE KESSEN-CHI CAN DO
MANJI SAME BODY YOUR FLESH.
MY FLESH THE SAME
WHILE I CAN.. STILL SPEAK. ONE.. ONE THING!
I TELL YOU, GIRL..
KAGEHISA... ANOTSU... IN TWO WEEKS. HE TRAVELS TO KAGA.
-?
THAT'S ALL. ALL I GOT... SAY...
NOT SO FAST, SHIZUMA. BEFORE YOU SLEEP...
TELL ME ONE THING.
WHY?! I NOTICED, PAL-- YOU SAW ME COMING DOWN ON YOU. JUST A SECOND EARLY!
BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO BLOCK ME. WHY??
HMM... GIRL.
IT'S TRUE-- WHAT YOU SAID. YOUR WORDS...
IT'S TRUE...
LIVING LIKE LIKE A WORM.

ONE
TIRES OF IT

THERE YOU THINK THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH?
RIN—
I GOTTA ASK— WHY'D YOU BOTHER TO BURY THAT BASTARD?
MM. I DON'T KNOW. SOME SORTA RESPECT, MAYBE?
FOR ALL THOSE YEARS OF LIFE. ?

BUT IN THE END, IT WASN'T TRUE
WHEN I WAS IN THE HUT – ALONE WITH HIM.
HE SAID HE COULD GIVE ME ETERNAL LIFE.
YOU KNOW...
BUT IF I REALLY WAS IMMORTAL... THEN STUFF LIKE REVENGE...
...ALL KINDS OF THINGS. THEY'D ALL BE SO EASY
"BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? WHEN HE SAID THAT
" I FELT SUCH HORROR.

WHO ON EARTH WOULD WANT THAT... WHO...?
NEVER DYING MEANS ALWAYS HAVING TO LIVE. NO MATTER WHAT THE PAIN OF EXISTENCE
RIN.
EEK!
WHY WERE YOU JUST STANDING THERE LIKE A BIG GOOF?!
LOOKS LIKE THAT BABY'S GONNA FALL INTO THE WATER.

UMM... MANJI...?
YEAH? WHAT?
DYING WITHOUT ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS...
...OR LIVING ON FOR YEARS AND REALIZING YOU WILL NEVER ACHIEVE THEM. WHICH IS WORSE?
HELL... NO WAY TO KNOW. UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD.

GLOSSARY

almyō: Ruler of a feudal fiefdom

Dōjō Training centers Here, centers for swordsmanship.

selmotsukō, Rengyō These plants Dutchman s Pipe and Forsythia) can alleviate e types of poisoning when boiled and sumed.

Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed kyo

o Hokkaido and the other islands north of At the time they were still controlled by indigenous Ainu peoples and were a perilous k door into closed Japan for foreign goods people.

o-ryū: The radical sword tradition led by otsu

nshi A swordsman, not necessarily born the samurai caste.

ssen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A nfected by them cannot die but feels like a mortal

son-satsu "Bloodworm killer."

agatsu: A ronin with Kin's enemy, Anotsu

uromachi: The reign of the Ashikaga shoguns Kyoto- A D 1338-1573. The last period of social stability in Japan before two centuries of civil war and the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword tradition taught by Kin s father.

Ryō. A high-value gold coin.

Sangin An official trip to the capital Daimyo of outlying fiefdoms were required to spend one year in three in Edo, allowing the Shogun to keep them under tight control

Sakura-mochi: A delicacy made from pounded sweet rice paste and cherry-tree leaves.

Sanzu no Kawa: River of the Dead Analogous to the River Styx in Greek mythology. Crossed by the dead on their way to the underworld.

Satori: The state of intuitive illumination sought by followers of Zen Buddhism, the movement of such enlightenment.

Toyotomi Toyotomi Hideyoshi A.D 1536-1598 the first warlord to unify Japan. After he died of an illness his empire collapsed and his son and heir was killed by the Tokugawa family, who rule Japan at the time of our story.

Uji: An area near Kyoto.

Warabi An edible plant (bracken or fernbrake).

COVER GALLERY

The following are Hiroaki Samura's covers from issues eight, seven-ten, and eleven of the *Blade of the Immortal* comics series. Issues nine through eleven of *Blade of the Immortal* also included pinups by many of the industry's finest artists. We chose to feature those of Gene Ha and Gary Gianni.

pinup by Gene H

pinup by Gary Gianni